

Transatlantic discourse on integration: the impact of the media on the integration process in Europe and the United States; a conference report

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Transatlantic Discourse on Integration

**The Impact of the Media on the Integration Process
in Europe and the United States.
A Conference Report**

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Bamberg, January 2007

european forum for migration studies

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1. Introduction

Since 2003, the *european forum for migration studies (efms)* has been organising the workshop series “Transatlantic Discourse on Integration” which is supported by the *German Marshall Fund of the United States*. The aim of these workshops is to bring together scientific and practical insights on integration issues and to promote the exchange of European and American expertise. As part of this series, the *efms* hosted the workshop “The Impact of the Media on the Integration Process in Europe and the United States” on December 4, 2006. This one-day workshop took place in the building of the broadcasting company *Rundfunkanstalt Berlin Brandenburg (RBB)* in Berlin. It brought together 38 European and American academics and policymakers, as well as representatives of non-governmental organisations and the media.

The impact of the media on the integration process is an important topic in current public discourse. Success of integration depends on adaptation and learning processes on the side of immigrants, as well as on openness and learning processes of the majority society. These processes are greatly influenced by the media: Media decide on what to report, how to report, and also on what not to report. The media therefore contribute to opinion making of the autochthonous and the migrant population, and they are major actors in agenda setting for the public discourse on migration and integration.

In order to analyse the relations between media and integration, the well-known formula from communication scientist Harold Lasswell, “Who says what, with what intent, to whom, with what effect?” can be applied: (1) It is of interest to analyse *who* is communicating a certain story. Who is, for instance, the author or moderator of a certain communication and who is the producer and controller of the media? Are migrants represented in those roles? Are the media mainstream media, ethnic media from the immigration country or foreign media from emigration countries? (2) *What* is the manifest and what is the latent content of the communication? (3) What is the *intent* of the coverage? Is it neutral information or entertainment? Does it support integration and improvement of migrants’ image, or the opposite: incitement of prejudice, xenophobia and racism? (4) Different *media* (for instance TV vs. radio or ethnic newspapers vs. majority newspapers) can play different roles in the integration process. (5) To *whom* is the communication addressed? Is it addressed to the majority society, to (particular groups of) migrants or to certain subgroups like managers, unions, or churches? (6) What *effect* does the communication have? What impact can media have on attitudes and behaviour?

All these dimensions were discussed in the course of the workshop in December. The content was divided into four sessions dealing with media coverage, ethics in the media, diversity in the media industry and the role of ethnic media.



Contents of the Workshop

After the welcome and introduction the workshop programme consisted of four sessions: *Media Coverage of Migration and Integration*, *Ethics in the Media*, *Diversity in the Media Industry* and *The Role of Ethnic Media in Immigration Societies*. The sessions were followed by a concluding discussion about the impact of the media on the integration process. The workshop ended with a guided tour through the studios of the broadcasting company *Rundfunkanstalt Berlin Brandenburg (RBB)*.

09:00 – 9:20 Welcome & Introduction

Prof. Dr. Friedrich Heckmann and **Doris Lüken-Klaßen**, european forum for migration studies, Bamberg

09:20 – 11:00 Media Coverage of Migration and Integration

09:20 – 9:40 **Prof. Dr. Georg Ruhmann**, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena:
“TV-news reports on migrants – contents, biases and effects”

09:40 – 10:00 **Prof. Mirta Ojito**, Columbia University & The New York Times, New York, USA:
“The role the media play in the acculturation of immigrants”

10:00 – 10:15 **Adrian S. Kostre**, radiomultikulti (Leiter der Redaktion MOST), Berlin:
“Foreigner On Air”

10:15 – 11:00 Questions & Discussion

11:00 – 12:00 Ethics in the Media

11:00 – 11:15 **Dr. Sabine Schiffer**, Institut für Medienverantwortung, Erlangen:
“Responsibility of the media in the migration discourse. The Example of Islam”

11:15 – 11:30 **Alexander Pollak**, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), Vienna, Austria:
“Approaches towards an EU-wide monitoring of discriminatory content and bias in the media”

11:30 – 12:00 Questions & Discussion

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch

13:00 – 14:00 Diversity in the Media Industry

13:00 – 13:15 **Mitsy Wilson**, FOX Entertainment Group, Senior Vice President Diversity Development, Beverly Hills, USA:
“Diversity in the US-American Entertainment Industry?”

13:15 – 13:30 **Ingerlise Andersen**, radiomultikulti (Chefin vom Dienst), Berlin:
“Radiomultikulti – Broadcasting with an accent”

13:30 – 14:00 Questions & Discussion



14:00 – 14:30	Coffee break
14:30 – 15:30	The Role of Ethnic Media in Immigration Societies
14:30 – 14:45	Pueng Vongs , New America Media, San Francisco, USA: <i>“The importance of ethnic media in the United States”</i>
14:45 – 15:00	Prof. Dr. Kai Hafez , Universität Erfurt: <i>“Media use of migrants in Germany and its non-effect on integration”</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Questions & Discussion
15:30 – 16:00	Concluding Discussion: The Impact of the Media on the Integration Process
16:00 – 17:00	Guided Tour: The studios of the broadcasting company <i>Rundfunkanstalt Berlin Brandenburg (RBB)</i> including the radio station <i>radiomultikulti</i>

1.1. Media Coverage of Migration and Integration

The opening presentation was held by **Professor Dr. Georg Ruhrmann**, Professor for mediated communication and media effects at the *Friedrich-Schiller Universität* of Jena. He first emphasized the importance of the media: Media reflect the role of migrants and of migration policies, they can reinforce prejudices, they represent and reflect social reality, and media also criticise and influence the political system as they draw attention to particular topics.

Continuing, Ruhrmann explained that reports about migrants are biased, and that they reinforce migrant stereotypes. Independent from official crime statistics, migrants are frequently portrayed as problematic groups or criminals, and, especially since 9/11, migrants are often portrayed as potential terrorists. These factors are accompanied by overrepresentation and related negative connotations of certain nationalities. While this was true for Turks in the 80s, today Moroccans are highly overrepresented in the media. However, this bias concerns not only the content, but also the stylistic framing and the semantic formulation of specific statements. The so-called “Linguistic Intergroup Bias” denotes the pattern that information about the own group (“ingroup”) is communicated more abstractly and neutrally than information about the “outgroup”. The Linguistic Intergroup Bias that enforces stereotypes can be observed in both oral and written communication.

Ruhrmann stated that the objectivity of news is at the heart of journalistic self-image, and argued that the four professional journalistic norms, (1) unbiased selection and presentation, (2) orientation towards actual facts, (3) correct description of what happened and (4) explicit judgement are not really respected in news concerning migration issues. Hence, Ruhrmann concluded with a plea for more responsibility in the media: Migrants’ integration could be improved by better journalism.



Mirta Ojito, journalist at *The New York Times* and visiting professor at *Columbia University* in New York, agreed that the media have a crucial role. She argued that the media in the U.S. play a pivotal role in the acculturation of immigrants in both detrimental and beneficial ways. Since the media in the U.S. do not distinguish between different nationalities, but put emphasis on ethnic groups by reporting on migrants, the media help immigrants to construct an ethnic identity. This, in turn, empowers the individual by allowing him/her to frame his/her narrative in the larger context of a group. The development of an ethnic identity often accelerates the acculturation process by providing the immigrant with a political, social and economic base. One example is the so-called *Latino empowerment* as demonstrated by the pro-immigration rallies in spring 2006 in several U.S. cities with a high concentration of Latino immigrants. On the other hand, the lumping together of all nationalities from a region of the world into ill-fitting labels such as “Asians” can be dangerous and dehumanizing. Before immigrants come to the U.S. they identify themselves with a distinctive nationality. Once in the U.S., though, they lose all sense of individuality and begin to see themselves as the media see them.

In the U.S., mainstream media also tend not to cover immigrants as if they were part of the U.S. The coverage is mostly superficial, predictable, often stereotypical, biased and negative. Latinos, for instance, are often described as criminals or as part of a dysfunctional underclass. In this context, Ojito stressed that words matter and condemned the “illegal immigrant” label: The act of crossing borders or overstaying visas can be illegal, but simply attaching the term “illegal” to a person would lead to discrimination. She argued that an immigrant who continually finds himself described as someone whose identity is always intertwined with the illegality of his actions can begin to internalize society’s low expectations, and in fact, behave as according to these biased expectations. According to Ojito this is more often the case among the children of immigrants, who, although born in the US, continue to think of themselves as being *in* the United States but not *of* the United States. In order to break this vicious cycle, the media have to incorporate immigrants into their total community coverage and eradicate dehumanizing and inaccurate labelling in the language, particularly the written word.

The presentation “Foreigner On Air” by **Adrian S. Kostré**, head of *MOST*, department of the radio station *radiomultikulti* in Berlin, followed Ojito. Kostre pointed out that due to their variety of experienced cultures and their double socialisation, migrant journalists can deliver a different, interesting view of common, well-known things and function as a kind of bridge between native and foreign residents. However, this potential remains mostly untapped. One reason for this is the constructed distinction made between “us” and “them”. One example of an implicit, “hidden” distinction is the news “Mr. A was attacked by Turk B”. The fact that the nationality of Mr. A is not specified tells that the victim is “one of us” while the attacker’s nationality is named: the “bad guy” is not one of “us”. Kostre criticised this simplistic distinction between “us” and “them” since these two terms are not sufficient to define who is a part of the society, and lead to discrimination and conflict. In accordance with Ojito, he argued that the negative coverage on migrants can create an artificial media-reality that does not correspond to the objective reality, but it can – in turn – even change the reality to match the media “reality”.



Radio programmes for foreign citizens – broadcast in their native languages – can be seen as a more positive attitude towards migrants. These programmes create a bridge to the country of emigration and help migrants to orient and integrate in the “new” country. But given that such programmes won’t be understood by native listeners, they are not very helpful in establishing communication between the two parties. *radiomultikulti* follows a more convincing concept: It offers programmes in different languages (sometimes even multiple languages within one programme), treats foreign residents as part of the German community, deals with subjects of interest to both native and foreign listeners and provides the opportunity for migrants to speak for themselves on air. Thus, “one-way street” programmes can become two-way streets.

1.2. Ethics in the Media

Dr. Sabine Schiffer, director of the *Institut für Medienverantwortung*, Erlangen, held a presentation on responsibility of the media in the migration and integration discourse exemplified by the coverage of Islam. Like Kostre, she criticised how “we” tend to define someone or something as “the other”. According to Schiffer, this concept allows us to project our own problems into said others. A typical “other” in the media is Islam. From the rise of the topic “Islam”, beginning with the Iranian Revolution in 1979, several negative ideas concerning Islam have become persistent due to media coverage: The idea of a repressive, intolerant and violent religion is the prevailing image of Islam. Schiffer stressed that 9/11 has not changed much the quality of coverage, but the quantity of coverage. It has made “islamophobia” more explicit and more visible.

Schiffer went on to illustrate how the media industry constructs and re-constructs this negative image. One factor is the generalisation. Furthermore, images play a crucial role: Often it is the presentation and combination of specific Muslim symbols, such as a mosque or a scarf, and certain negative facts that give Islam a negative connotation. By painting these pictures of Islam, current reporting on Islam could even be labelled “a successful PR campaign for Islamic fundamentalists”. They therefore have the power to explain what – according to them – Islam is. Nonetheless, the majority of the Muslim community has other positions. Schiffer criticised the media for giving extremists too much space to communicate their radical ideas.

This coverage has negative implications on the integration process. The generalized and often negative coverage does not invite participation and integration in the society. On the contrary it can even lead – on both sides – to resignation and retirement, to idealisation, stagnation and to radicalisation in thought or action. Thus media have to accept responsibility in the migration discourse. But how to name and blame problems without falling into the trap of generalisation? Schiffer recommended including cultural diversity and topics such as Islam in normal coverage and showing the diversity of the society in school books, TV, or newspapers. Presenting diversity as normal (as it is) can help to perceive it as normal, too.

Alexander Pollak, media expert at the *European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)* in Vienna, presented the *EUMC* approach to EU-wide monitoring of discriminatory content and bias in the media. He started his presentation with the claim that media discourse is a vehicle of



common sense. Citing the work of the sociologist Hall, he distinguished between a common sense that is based on a general agreement of what can and should be said publicly, and secondly a common sense that is constituted through a common background knowledge of cultural practices – which then forms a common basis for communication processes within a society. Both forms of common sense work as exclusionary mechanisms in society.

Next, he differentiated between structural and content-related discrimination by the media. In general terms, structural discrimination means the intentional or unintentional presence of structural barriers that lead to disadvantage of certain groups. In the case of media discrimination, it means a low presence of migrant and minority people as media actors. The possible reasons are twofold: On an institutional level, migrants are excluded from positions that decide on how things are publicly represented and who represents them. On the level of public visibility, migrants are excluded from actual public appearance. Structural discrimination has an important impact on content-related discrimination (including both verbal and visual elements). The content-related discrimination can take four forms: racist stereotyping, marginalisation migrants and minorities, vilification of persons who challenge racism and the denial of discrimination.

In the third part of his presentation, Pollak discussed how the *EUMC* will in all likelihood monitor and combat discrimination in public speech. With regards to open hate speech, a possible way will be the installation of a complaint system combined with a selective monitoring system. With regards to less obvious forms of discrimination, the *EUMC* could do quantitative research in the form of content analysis, but will mainly focus on qualitative research such as discourse analysis. Most indicators of explicit forms of discrimination have already been discussed in the first session, for instance the construction of homogeneous “us” and “them”-groups, but also the denial of the existence of discrimination. More crucial are the implicit forms of discrimination such as differences in the representation of groups, e.g. different terminology and attributions or active versus passive representation. There is also a discriminatory gap between facts that have been presented versus those facts that could have been presented (e.g. background). To get an idea of what has *not* been said, but could have been said, the *EUMC* could do a cross-media, cross-country and/ or diachronic analysis.

As a final point Pollak presented various ways through which the media discourse can be influenced. We could change our own language use and influence the language use of others (in our own environment, but also through legal measures and media monitoring). We could contribute to the changing of structures that produce inequalities and asymmetric power relations, and could support the education and employment of migrants as journalists. Finally, we could vote for political parties that are prepared to reduce inequality and discrimination and could support media that promote equality.

1.3. Diversity in the Media Industry

Mitsy Wilson, Senior Vice President and head of the Diversity Development department at the *FOX Entertainment Group*, has direct responsibility for the development, execution and evaluation of all diversity initiatives across the *FOX Group* and various other *News Corporation* companies. *News Corporation* has total assets of approximately \$ 58 billion (US) and over 35,000 employees. The core



business includes filmed entertainment, television, new media, magazines and newspapers, as well as book publishing. *FOX television* (one part of Murdoch's *News Corporation*) is one of the largest producers of primetime programming on American television, and is number one in reaching young adults, teens and male viewers.

After presenting several facts about the company background, Wilson explained how changes in demography have an impact on business. The American minorities are becoming the majority; in 2008, 80% of all new entrance into the workforce will be people of colour, migrants and women. This diversity of society impacts the activities of US media. If they do not want to lose a large amount of money, they will have to keep or gain these people as customers. To remain competitive, *FOX* is increasing minority inclusion in casting, directing, writing, production and procurement, and is creating infrastructure and intentional objectives toward diversity in all companies. *FOX* is welcoming change and even has a diversity mission: "we are committed to improving the performance of the *FOX* organisation through diversity. We believe our future rests in our collective ability to embrace change and leverage our diversity".

The diversity strategy has company-wide support. Wilson works closely with senior executives of major production operations, including, for instance, filmed entertainment, sports and news. One third of managers and officials at the *FOX Group* are people of colour, nearly matching national demographics. The key strategic components are various and include, among others, creative aspects, communication, recruitment and emerging markets. Wilson presented activities and results. Concerning communications, *FOX* maintains a comprehensive diversity development web site about diversity programmes and initiatives. For a better use of emerging markets, they created a Hispanic council and developed strategic marketing plans for films such as *Ice Age 2*. To improve the recruitment of minority and female staff, the company offers internships and delivers a "safe environment" including mentoring and special training. *FOX* hires writers of colour for 80% of its productions.

To conclude, Wilson stressed that diversity management is not a moral issue linked to the civil rights movement, but an issue with an economic base and motivation.

In her presentation "Radiomultikulti – Broadcasting with an accent" **Ingerlise Andersen**, programmatic director of the radio station *radiomultikulti*, gave a detailed report about the concept and structure of *radiomultikulti*. This radio station is part of the public broadcasting company *Rundfunkanstalt Berlin Brandenburg (RBB)* and is interested in a great variety of topics and cultures. From 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. *radiomultikulti* broadcasts in German. However, topics are multicultural: "world-wide lifestyle", international news, global trends, and reports from around the world. The time after 5 p.m. is reserved for languages other than German. The station offers programmes in Turkish, Russian, Arabic, Italian, but also in less common languages such as Macedonian and Romanes. All together, the radio station broadcasts in 18 different languages. According to Andersen, *radiomultikulti's* programme provides music and stories you don't hear elsewhere and also "normal" news and information, but seen from another angle.

Of the seven *RBB* programmes (*radiomultikulti*, *Inforadio*, *Fritz*, *Kulturradio*, *Radio Berlin 88.8*, *Radioeins* and *Antenne Brandenburg*) *radiomultikulti* is the only one that looks explicitly at diversity.



Hence *radiomultikulti* serves also as a multicultural competence centre for the other more mainstream programmes.

Furthermore, Andersen raised the question of acceptance of accents concerning both specific and linguistic topics. Even though many listeners find an accent quite amusing and charming, it is nearly impossible to work in the media industry with a “foreign” accent (no matter if it is an alien or Bavarian accent). This non-acceptance as well as other structural discrimination (like age limits) have negative implication for application chances of migrants in the media industry. In *radiomultikulti*, these barriers do not exist.

Concluding, radiomultikulti can be seen as a very special radio station – and, since it reflects the reality of its residents, as the most “normal” station in Berlin.

1.4. The Role of Ethnic Media in Immigration Societies

Pueng Vongs from *New America Media*, a U.S. nationwide association of over 700 ethnic media organisations, located in San Francisco, described the importance of ethnic media in the United States. Her presentation began with a short video showing views of ethnic media editors from across the U.S. Subsequently Vongs explained that the ethnic media have grown exponentially with increasing immigration into the United States in recent decades. The rise of media outlets represents the diverse array of U.S. ethnic communities. In places like San Francisco, one major English language newspaper exists, whereas there are many more foreign language papers (e.g. five Chinese and six Spanish). The same is true for many cities across the U.S. Ethnic media, which often begin as small operations run by family or community members, are growing in terms of quantity, and are gaining more credibility and importance in the American media landscape.

Pueng stressed that ethnic media differs from mainstream media in the way they cover news. Ethnic media often report from inside the communities and use reporters and editors who are members of the respective ethnic groups and who understand intimately the concerns and issues in their communities. These views are often missed by mainstream media which take a more detached approach to news. Thus, the ability of ethnic media to produce comprehensive, insightful reports on new ethnic and immigrant communities is unparalleled. Concerning the effects of ethnic media use, she argued that these media do not isolate communities, but that they translate stories – in both linguistic, and also cultural terms. Therefore, they can be helpful in acculturating and integrating migrants.

Concluding, she discussed how the NGO *New America Media* builds bridges between mainstream and ethnic media by bringing together ethnic and mainstream media on reporting projects. In addition, *New America Media* aggregates and (re-)produces original content for ethnic and mainstream media, and offers professional development seminars for ethnic media journalists. The result of these activities is improved news coverage of often misunderstood ethnic and immigrant communities. Also, it helps foster a greater understanding among residents of rapidly changing neighbourhoods in the United States.



Professor Dr. Kai Hafez, from the University of Erfurt, gave a presentation about media use of migrants in Germany and its “non-effect” on integration.

In public discourse, the use of ethnic media is often perceived as a sign of non-integration. Another frequently encountered assumption is that the use of ethnic media is even responsible for the formation of parallel societies. Migrants consuming only media of the hosting society, in contrast, are considered to be well integrated. Hafez, however, contests these assertions, as they are too simplistic. According to his research, there is no clear relation between the use of foreign and / or German media on the one hand, and political attitudes and integration on the other. Every media type can correlate with any pattern of integration. Hafez stressed that migrants can strongly identify themselves with their home country and still only use German media. On the other hand, the political or social integration of a person can be high even if they are consuming mainly foreign media.

Hafez argued that media construct certain images of “others” and that they can build barriers. Nevertheless, he pointed out that media themselves do not have any considerable effect on the integration and identification process of migrants. This provocative statement was an excellent starting point for the following discussion on “The impact of the media in the integration process”.

1.5. Guided Tour: The Studios of RBB

The seminar finished with a guided tour through the studios of the broadcasting company *Rundfunkanstalt Berlin Brandenburg (RBB)*, including the radio station *radiomultikulti*. A guide explained about the *RBB*’s history, the outstanding architecture of the building and the techniques employed in TV and radio. Journalists in the studios also told about their daily work at a (multicultural) radio station.

2. The Participants of the Workshops

Ingerlise Andersen, Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, radiomultikulti, Chefin vom Dienst, Berlin

Prof. Dr. Jannis Androutsopoulos, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Juniorprofessur Medienkommunikation, Hannover

Ali Aslan, Bundesministerium des Innern, Berlin

Staci Bivens, Bundesministerium des Innern, Berlin

Nicole Bosch, european forum for migration studies (efms), Researcher, Bamberg

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Daniela Gerson, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Schollar, Berlin

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Prof. Dr. Friedrich Heckmann, european forum for migration studies (efms), Director, Bamberg



Prof. Barbara John, Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport, Koordinatorin Sprach- und Bildungsmaßnahmen für Migranten, Berlin

Martina Kaup, Herbert-Quandt-Stiftung, Projektleiterin des Stipendienprogramms für Nachwuchsjournalisten, Medienarbeit und Publikationen, Bad Homburg

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Adrian S. Kostré, Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, radiomultikulti, Leiter der Redaktion MOST, Berlin

Dr. Harald Lederer, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF), Nürnberg

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Heike Mac Kerron, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Senior Director for Europe, Berlin

Doris Nahawandi, Bezirksamt Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg von Berlin, Beauftragte für Integration und Migration, Berlin

Prof. Mirta Ojito, Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University, New York, U.S.A.

Alexander Pollak, EUMC, Researcher, Wien, Austria

Prof. Dr. Horst Pöttker, Universität Dortmund, Institut für Journalistik, Dortmund

Bryant Pritchett, U.S. Embassy Berlin

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RA Klaus Rutow, Rechtsanwälte Rutow + Foerster, Vorstandsvorsitzender efms e.V,

Dr. Sabine Schiffer, Institut für Medienverantwortung, Leiterin, Erlangen

Katharina Schmieder, european forum for migration studies (efms), Research assistant, Bamberg

Dr. med. Roman Snihurowych, Psychiatry - Columbia University, Health Care Analyst, New York, U.S.A.

Riem Spielhaus, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften

Sabina Stelzig, Hamburgisches WeltWirtschaftsinstitut (HWWI), Migration Research Group, Hamburg

Anette Stephan, Bundesministerium des Innern, Berlin

Ruth Anne Stevens, U.S. Embassy Berlin

Ulrich de Taillez, Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, Ministerialdirigent, München

Alexander Thamm, Projektmanagement und Politikberatung, Kreuth

Lars von Törne, Der Tagesspiegel, Redakteur, Berlin

Pueng Vongs, New America Media, Editor, San Francisco, U.S.A.

Mitsy Wilson, FOX Entertainment Group, Diversity Development, Beverly Hills, U.S.A.

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Ali Yumusak, Europress. Deutsch-Türkische Medienagentur, Geschäftsführer, Berlin

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